CHARLIE CHAPLIN WOULD APPROVE

Richard Green, mixing with the Rothschilds, reports from the bizarre home-made studios in Switzerland where Purple are cutting their new album, 'Machine Head'

TAKE a plane to Geneva, drive to Montreaux, pass the shell of the burned-out Casino, pull up at the rear entrance of the Grand Hotel, climb the marble steps, cross the lounge, enter room 62, walk through the French doors onto the balcony, go in through the windows of room 56, pass through two bathrooms and room 57, open the door into the corridor and there you find Deep Purple cutting their next album!

That may all sound just a little bizarre, but it's just what I had to do at the weekend when I flew out from London to catch up on the progress of the successor to "Fireball" which has just re-entered the NME album chart.

Deep Purple had gone to Montreaux to appear at the Casino and they planned to cut an album there under simulated live concert conditions and then to cut another in a studio and issue them as a double package. But the fire put a stop to all that.

Not easy

"Trying to find somewhere to record wasn't easy," said Purple's co-manager, John Coletta, on the flight out. "We got kicked out of two places we tried because of the noise but eventually we found the Grand Hotel which has been closed for redecoration."

Outside the hotel stood the Rolling Stones' mobile recording unit with its eight and sixteen tracks machines and closed circuit TV showing what's going on inside the actual studio. It's a monster of a vehicle completely dwarfing Purple's own lorry which itself is extra large.

Inside it — you have to climb steps to enter — Roger Glover was talking to engineer Martin Birch who the group had taken out from De Lane Lea Studios. The Stones' own engineer was there plus a young journalist named Frederick Rothschild — one of THE Rothschilds.

Ian Gillan was in the home-made studio running through the words of a song he's recently written and I went in to have a look at the place. The studio had been constructed in a corridor at the point where another corridor led off it.

Three extra "walls" had been put up made out of mattresses, padding, hardboard and fibre glass so that the studio was T-shaped. Masses of equipment both musical and electrical, yards of wiring, several flourescent lights, lamps and an industrial heater packed the area.

Just right

The balance had to be just right but I gathered that Richie Blackmore frequently caused furrowed brows with his habit of wandering about when playing. "I can play this bit better in another place," was his alleged explanation.

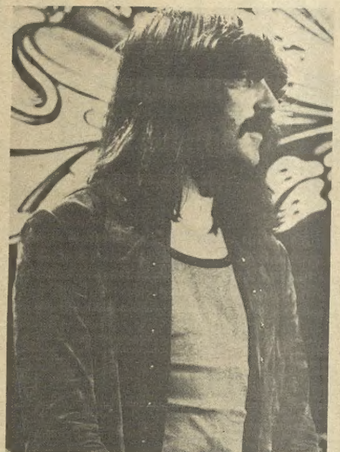
The album will be released in both stereo and quadraphonic sound and is due for Britain and America in late February or early March to coincide with Purple's second U.S. tour of 1972. Titled "Machine Head," the album will have a cover with a layer of silver paper on it. On the paper will be the name of the group and the title of the album and a colour picture of the lads reflected in the surface.

The words have been pushed into a sheet of aluminium which is being used as the work plate.

Roger came into the studio and told me: "This is the best album we've ever done, by far the best. The atmosphere has been really great."

Later, at dinner in an Italian restuarant, Roger told me about the fire which has completely destroyed the Casino which was insured for £1,400,000 and which will take up to two years to re-build. The fire had apparently been started as the Mothers Of Invention were reaching their climax and a "gentleman" of Oriental or Asiatic origin let off a distress flare which ignited the ceiling and soon the whole place was engulfed in flames.

"I was watching the band and everyone started turning round looking towards the back, so I turned round to see what was happening and I heard a crackling sound which was the roof burning," Roger explained.



JON LORD: "Too much time was spent making 'Fireball'"

Up it went

"I thought it had gone out and I hung around for about seven minutes then wandered aimlessly outside because everyone else was A few minutes later the whole place went up."

Before he went back to the studio, Ian Gillan came to me to what was laughingly described as an English pu Apart from its decor of Victoriana and honky-tonk taped music it bore as much resemblance to an Englis inn as Engelbert Humperdinck does to Billy Graham.

We got chatting about Purple's albums and Ian commented: "'Deep Purple In Rock' established an identity, it was a raucous, 'Fireball' took a long time to make as didn't have any of the rou edges that we like.

Going well

"This one has been done very quickly and the main reason it's going so well is that we had a month off before we did it and we were all keyed up and eag to do it.

"We've been here for over a week but we have to three days off to fly back to England to do 'Top Of The Pops' and we've still also finished it.

"There are two more backing tracks to lay down tonight and tomorrow and I've got a couple more songs to do then we're finished it'll take about ten days in all.

"Most of our numbers are written in the studio and it's been like that all time. One number called 'Smoke On The Water' is about the fire at the Casino. 'Space Trucking' is a piece of rock and roll and the are 'Highway Star' and 'Lazy' that we did on the last tour, which is a reversion of the way we usually do — they started on stage and now we're recording the studio sound. There won't be time for mixing, we'll probably do the mixes at Muscle Shoals at the start of the American tour, it starts in Tampa, Florida and that's not far away."

The group slept late the next day as they'd been recording into the early hours so I went up a mountain on one of those frightening ski lifts and once at the top distinguished myself by walking across the snow and falling in it while everyone else managed to conduct themselves with decorum. So it was straight back to the Eurotel Hotel on the shore of the lake at Montreaux where Jon Lord was taking tea with young Mr Rothschild.

Speed

I mentioned the speed with which the recording was being done and Jon agreed, telling me: "We took your last comment to heart, we really did — there was too much time spent in making 'Fireball.'

"'Deep Purple In Rock' was done the way we really like to do albums. This one is going to be so much better than 'Fireball,' more immediate, with a greater sense of urgency."

Photographer Shep Sherbell who is working on the album cover rigged up a makeshift studio in his room which adjoined mine by borrowing lamps from every available room. The group filed in to be photographed rather unhappy about the police having halted the recording session for the night because of the noise.

They eased their worries in the only way known to man by raiding all the fridges in our rooms and turning my quarters into a miniature Speakeasy.

It wasn't until I was on the way to the airport the next morning that someone pointed out that Charlie Chaplin lived in the next town of Vervy. Somehow I think he would have approved of the Deep Purple set-up just along the road.

DEEP PURPLE RECORDING SESSION

DEEP PURPLE: Recording new album (l to r) IAN PAICE, RITCHIE BLACKMORE, IAN GILLAN (front), ROGER GLOVER and JON LORD.

MUCH BETTER THAN 'FIREBALL', MORE IMMEDIATE, WITH A SENSE OF URGENCY

A fireball of another kind — the casino at Montreaux where Deep Purple were to have recorded going up in flames.